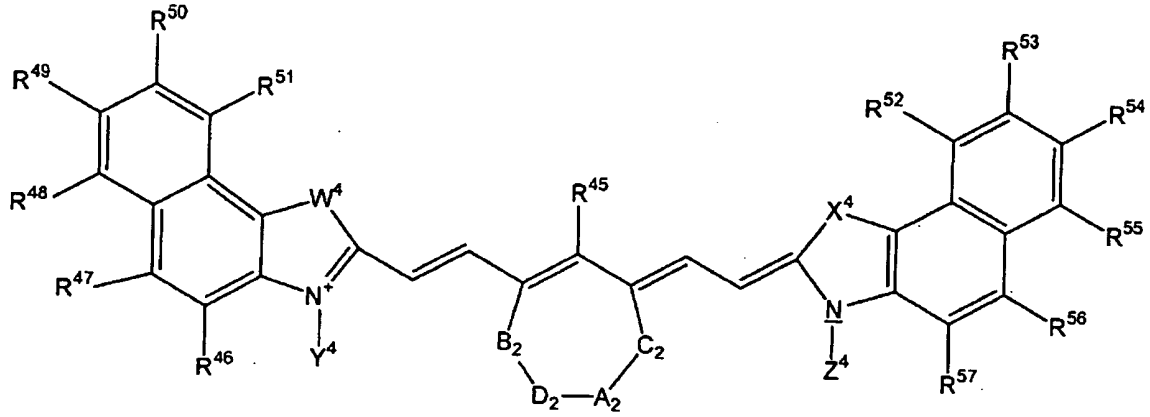
Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph beginning on page 7, line 14, to page 9, line 13 with the amended paragraph:

In a second embodiment, the inventive composition comprises cyanine dyes of general formula 2.



wherein W^4 and X^4 may be the same or different and are selected from the group consisting of $-CR^1R^2$, -O-, $-NR^3$, -S-, and –Se; Y^4 is selected from the group consisting of $-(CH_2)_a$-CONH-Bm, $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2$-CONH-Bm, $-(CH_2)_a$-NHCO-Bm, $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2$-NHCO-Bm, $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_b$-CONH-Bm, $(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_c$-NHCO-Bm, $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2$-CONH-Bm, $-(CH_2)_a-N(R^3)-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2$-NHCO-Bm, $-CH_2-(CH_2OCH_2)_b-CH_2-N(R^3)-(CH_2)_a$-CONH-Bm, $-CH_2-$

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$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-$(CH_2)_a$-NHCO-Bm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_d$-CONH-Bm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_d$-NHCO-Bm, -$(CH_2)_a$-NR^3R^4, and -$CH_2(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-$CH_2NR^3R^4$; Z^4 is selected from the group consisting of -$(CH_2)_a$-CONH-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-CONH-Dm, -$(CH_2)_a$-NHCO-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-NHCO-Dm, -$(CH_2)_a$-$N(R^3)$-$(CH_2)_b$-CONH-Dm, $(CH_2)_a$-$N(R^3)$-$(CH_2)_c$-NHCO-Dm, -$(CH_2)_a$-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-CONH-Dm, -$(CH_2)_a$-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-NHCO-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-$(CH_2)_a$-CONH-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-$(CH_2)_a$-NHCO-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_d$-CONH-Dm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-$N(R^3)$-CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_d$-NHCO-Dm, -$(CH_2)_a$-NR^3R^4, and -$CH_2(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-$CH_2NR^3R^4$; A_2 is a single or a double bond; B_2, C_2, and D_2 may be the same or different and are selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S-, -Se-, -P-, $-CR^1R^2$, $-CR^1$, alkyl, NR^3, and -C=O; A_2, B_2, C_2, and D_2 may together form a 6- to 12-membered carbocyclic ring or a 6- to 12-membered heterocyclic ring optionally containing one or more oxygen, nitrogen, or sulfur atom; a_4 and b_4 independently vary from 0 to 5; R^1 to R^4, and R^{45} to R^{57} are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, C_1-C_{10} alkyl, C_5-C_{20} aryl, C_1-C_{10} alkoxyl, C_1-C_{10} polyalkoxyalkyl, C_1-C_{20} polyhydroxyalkyl, C_5-C_{20} polyhydroxyaryl, C_1-C_{10} aminoalkyl, cyano, nitro, halogen, saccharide, peptide, -$CH_2(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-OH, -$(CH_2)_a$-CO_2H, -$(CH_2)_a$-CONH-Bm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-CONH-Bm, -$(CH_2)_a$-NHCO-Bm, -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CH_2-NHCO-Bm, -$(CH_2)_a$-OH and -CH_2-$(CH_2OCH_2)_b$-CO_2H; Bm and Dm are independently selected from the group consisting of a bioactive peptide, a protein, a cell, an antibody, an antibody fragment, a saccharide,

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a glycopeptide, a peptidomimetic, a drug, a drug mimic, a hormone, a m tal chelating agent, a radioactive or nonradioactive metal complex, and an echogenic agent; a and c are independently from 1 to 20; and b and d are independently from 1 to 100.

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